7/1/68

To Louis Ivon
From Harold Weisberg
Training camps

There seems to have been still a fourth camp on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. I have confirmed the existence of the third with the St. Tammany Sheriff's department and expect pictures of its location. There are other sources I was not able to speak to. The Covington State police had have no knowledge of any of the camps, or say they do not. In addition to the FBI, the USMarshall's office is supposed to have a complete report on all the camps.

From the first of my inquiries, those who seem to be best informed in the area pointed to former deputy Luther Moran as an important source. On my previous visits no one was home. He is recovering from a heart attack. On my last visit he was home but with a high fever and unable to speak to me. He was awaiting the doctor. He lives near Henry Keller's gas station (Conoco), store and beer stand. From Keller's one crosses the road. There is a shell road crossing the railroad tracks (pulpwoodsiding) and a cattle guard. The first road on the right goes only to Moran's. Mrs. Moran had some knolwedge. She identified the second munitions cache as near Tranquility cemetery on the Slidell road, in the open, with no building there. She also sent me to W.L.Easter.

Easter is an elderly gentlemenx who lives in the third little house on the right on Pontchartrain Drive, a shell road off the main one. He remembersthe raided dump well. It is 2-300 yards in front of his home. He told me this story about it (confirmed by the sherfff's office): There was a single man there. He saw him bring things in only once and presumes other deliveries were in the dark of night, if there were any. A U-Haul trailer was use when he saw it. Once "fire got to within 20 yards of that place. If it had got to it, it would have blown the whole country away." After the fire, a Negro who lived next door reported the existence of the cache to the sheriff's office. The house in which the explosives were, theMcLaney property, is actually on the next, unmarked road. The Negro is dead. Both houses seem to be occupied.

At the next Conoco station, about 5 miles away, about which I have given you another report, I found a man who was unwilling to talk, specifying fear. I got him to speak some by promising to keep his name confidential. He is Sam Crawford, who is about 30, 6'4", curly dark brown ~~year~~ hair, worn long on top, tanned, a self-described lady's man, well built but not fat, with a "rebel" tatoo on the back of his right hand and apparently resident there. It is possible he will supply more information to me by mail.

He is the source of information on the fourth camp. He refuses to pinpoint it but says it was within five miles of that point, on the lake shore, with no building but a tent in the woods, invisible from the air, and staffed by a maximum of seven Cubans at one time. He professes to know no names and smiles when he says it

He also describes it as a "stopover place". His story is that Cubans were watching the local bars for sailors. He dates this as in 1963, before the assassination, and for a period of about three months. When they spotted men they thought could sail boats to Cuba they approached them, as they did him. The deal was this: The fee was $500 per trip. A very fast 16-foot boat was provided (he says 65 m.p.h.) and a compass setting. There was only the one man. The cargo was three cases of rifles and three of ammo. The landing point was selected to allow margin for navigational error. He thinks there were also larger boats.

The camp was on State land.

The plan was to send at least 5 boats a week. He says that the first week, the first three were sunk. He believes this was about average on subsequent efforts.

He says he knew only one man, that they called themselves an "Freedom Fighters", and if they had any other name, he does not know it. They were all dressed in green fatigues, at the camp, and in sports clothes in the bars.

He is a Navy veteran, was in the Bay of Pigs on Destroyer Escort 510.

My earlier reports indicate that former Deputy Philip Helm has knowledge of the camps and was "arrested" by the men at Richard Davis' camp. I have made a number of unsuccessful efforts to contact him. Local inquiry indicates he has not been seen for more than a week and may be on vacation. He lives in Slidell, on Pearl Acres road. Should anyone want to reach him, the phone is 643-1775. Pearl Acres road is unmarked. It is to the left on the extension of Front Street, past Interstate 10, past a communications installation on the right, and opposite a church. His house is a small white one on the right side near an intersection and opposite the Pearl Acres Baptist Church. Helm was with now lieutenant Bennett of the Sheriff's Department the night they visited three training camps. Some reports say he is or until recently has been a bondsman.

My reception at the Sheriff's office in Covington was friendly. It is on the right, first floor, in the courthouse, which is on the right just past the second traffic light. I had stopped a total of three deputies while I was driving around. One of them came up to me here and wished me (and us) well. A lieutenant on the road did likewise, and the lieutenant on duty was helpful. It was the consensus that now-Lieutenant Lavinghouse, then off duty, would have knowledge and he was reached for me by phone. He is one of those who supervised the evacuation of one camp. At the conclusion of our conversation he wished me and your office well and expressed the hope the case can be brought to trial. His home phone is 892-4630

Lt. Lavinghouse things he can still find that camp, apparently the Davis one. He promised that as soon as possible, perhaps today, he will try and get there with a photographer and take pictures for me. He is certain there was no swimming pool there. The complaint was from neighbors, who were apprehensive about the gun fire. Luther Moran accompanied him when he went there. He saw about 20 men, says there may have

been more. They got to the camp about 2 p.m. and the men were all gone by dark and by truck. By the time they got there, they found only two old M-1 rifles, which he gave to Luther Moran.

Incidently, Moran promised, through his wife, to write me what he can recall when he is well enough.

The man who seemed to be in charge was a tall, husky, red-faced American. He had a stationwagon. There was also a truck with a tarpaulin cover. He says the camp was situated right on a bayou. He recalls the house as a good-sized one with a screened-in porch that was used as a barracks.

In some ways this seems not to be the camp described to me by Chillas Ann Cole and Lieutenant Bennett. I wonder if it could be the Minuteman camp.

I confirmed what Bennetthad told me, that as of the time of the camp there was virtaully no filing system. Bennett, who also was friendly yesterday, has promised he will search for any still-existing records (he thinks there are none). No one was aware of any list of names in the office.

At both the State Police barracks and here I was told that both the FBI and the U.S. Marshall's office have complete repports on the camps or at least the ammo cache that was raided. This is the first reference I have had to the involvement of the marshalls. That State Police office said it has no copy of the report.